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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**OWNER OF FORMER SILVER SPRING
HEALTH CARE STAFFING COMPANY PLEADS GUILTY TO FRAUD**

GREENBELT- United States Attorney Thomas M. DiBiagio announced that Sandra Hinds, age 37, of Silver Spring, Maryland, pleaded guilty yesterday before United States District Judge Deborah K. Chasanow to wire fraud arising from a scheme to defraud area nursing homes by making false representations. Specifically, Hinds falsely represented to area nursing homes that she was providing them with employees of her health care staffing company, Reliable Nurses, Inc., whom the defendant claimed were licensed and certified in Maryland. Hinds, a registered nurse, was charged in a criminal Indictment with fraud in connection with the operation of Reliable and the placement of unlicensed, uncertified personnel in area nursing homes from 1996 through 1999.

According to a stipulated statement of facts, Hinds admitted that she was the president and director of nursing for Reliable, a company providing temporary nursing staff to nursing homes, hospitals, patients' homes and doctors' offices. Temporary nursing staff placed by Reliable included licensed practical nurses (LPNs), registered nurses (RN), certified nursing assistants (CNAs) and geriatric nursing assistants (GNAs). Reliable entered into contractual arrangements with several

nursing homes in the Maryland/Virginia/ Washington, D.C. area, agreeing to provide properly credentialed personnel for work assignments. Under Maryland law, Reliable was required to verify the licensure and status of the LPNs, RNs, and GNAs before dispatching these workers to health care facilities in Maryland to render temporary nursing support.

On June 10, 1998, Carroll Manor Nursing Home located in Washington, D.C. received an anonymous handwritten letter with an attachment listing 33 names of employees provided to the nursing home by Reliable who were not properly certified. Carroll Manor checked with various licensing and certification agencies and discovered that in fact, several of the licenses provided by Reliable were falsified, altered or forged. Subsequent investigation revealed several incidents where uncertified, unlicensed personnel were sent to Carroll Manor, including one instance where an unlicensed CNA worked at the nursing home from September 1996 through May, 1998. Reliable sent invoices to Carroll Manor in the amount of \$26,000 seeking payment for this particular employee's services.

Reliable's clientele included Greenbelt Nursing Center, Mariner of Bethesda, Medlantic at Lamond Riggs, Mariner at North Arundel, Manor Care of Silver Spring and St. Agnes Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. Greenbelt Nursing Center received a fraudulent license from Reliable for an employee who was supposed to be an LPN licensed in Maryland. Hinds submitted invoices by facsimile to Carroll Manor and other nursing homes fraudulently seeking payment for services provided at the nursing homes by unlicensed personnel.

In April, 1999 law enforcement agents executed search warrants at the defendant's home and business. Among the items seized were more than 60 "cut and paste" documents containing the names of several Reliable employees which had been altered, blocked out, or "corrected" with

white-out to make the documents appear as if they were bona fide licensing and certification documents from the state of Maryland.

The maximum penalty for wire fraud is 5 years in prison, followed by 3 years of supervised release and a \$250,000 fine. Judge Chasanow scheduled sentencing for March 8, 2004.

The case was investigated by the Office of Inspector General, Health and Human Services, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Gina L. Simms and Virginia B. Evans.